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SUBJECT: INCREASINGLY CONFIDENT GOC EMBRACES DOHA PROCESS,
AND CONDITIONS OFFER TO TALK WITH CHAD REBELS

REF: A. NDJAMENA 54
1B. KHARTOUM 212

Classified By: Ambassador Louis J. Nigro, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

SUMMARY

11. (C) Ambassador Nigro told FM Moussa Faki Mahamat February 24 that the US was pleased with the Doha Agreement and would support Chief Mediator Bassole's future efforts. Ambassador urged the GOC both to use its influence with JEM and other Sudan rebel groups to encourage them embrace the Doha Process and to end all support from Chad to Sudan rebel groups. Faki said the GOC fully supported Doha and was optimistic about it a first step in resolving the Darfur crisis. Faki gave the Qataris equal credit with Bassole for fairness and effectiveness. Faki said that Chad's Riyad Ambassador had observed in Doha; that Chad wanted to participate appropriately in future rounds; and that the Qatari Emir would visit N'djamena on February 28. Faki also said that a CEMAC meeting in Brazzaville at Ministerial level was scheduled to end February 27, making Chad, Congo and Gabon attendance at the Contact Group in Khartoum impossible on February 28. Thus Congo-Brazzaville had asked the GOS to postpone "for a few days."

12. (C) To the Ambassador's questions about the prospects for GOC-Chad Rebel talks after Doha, Faki said that the GOC's strategic diplomatic goal was bilateral detente and reduction of tensions with the GOS, not pursuit of negotiations the Chad rebels, who were vile mercenaries of Sudan, with no independent political vision. Faki said that USG efforts after February 2008, to try to dissuade further rebel attacks by talking calmly and pointedly to the rebel groups, had not worked; they had coldly attacked Chad in June. The rebels were increasingly divided, their strength diminished, and their dependence on the GOS total. The GoC would not make concessions to the rebels, but sought instead a solution to the Darfur conflict, which would allow most Chadian rebels to choose to come home (he mentioned Soubiane) and the rest to be obliged to go into exile elsewhere (he mentioned Erdimi and Mahamat Nouri, whom he described as "traitors". Rebels would have to leave Sudan, renounce violence, and contact the GOC, for talks to start, said Faki. "They can come to us directly -- they know who we are, they have our mobile numbers."

13. (C) Faki's comments on Doha and the Chad rebels reflect increased GOC confidence regarding the objective correlation of power between Chad and Sudan, and N'Djamena's reduced fear of renewed Chad rebel attacks. That President Deby would be touring the East close to on the anniversary of last February's debacle in N'djamena, making incendiary

anti-Sudanese and anti-Chad rebel speeches, including in military posts hard on the border, underlines this renewed confidence. The GOC's increased self-assurance, which explains its reluctance to reach out to Chad rebels, is based on a number of perceptions, military, political, and diplomatic. We, the French and the UN SRSG agree generally with the GOC analysis. But we have always said, and still hold, that the only ones who really know exactly if, when, and where Chad rebels will attack into Chad -- are the Chad rebel leaders themselves. That's our story, and we're sticking to it. END SUMMARY.

¶4. (C) FORMIN FAKI: FM Moussa Faki Mahamat and Ambassador met February 24 to discuss Chad's reaction to the Doha Agreement and the possibility of the GOC offering to meet and talk to Chad rebels without preconditions, including outside the Sirte Accord framework. DCM was notetaker.

¶5. (C) CHAD SUPPORTS, OPTIMISTIC ABOUT DOHA: Ambassador told Faki that the USG was very pleased with the Doha Agreement and with Chief Mediator Bassole's successful strategy, which we would continue to support as the process moved forward. Ambassador urged the GOC to use its influence with JEM to encourage JEM's continued engagement and commitment to Doha and with other Sudanese rebel groups to join the process themselves. Ambassador also urged the GOC to take steps to end support to all Sudan rebel groups from Chad and to embrace the process itself, as Chad was so deeply implicated in war and peace in Sudan. Faki said he was generally positive regarding the Doha Agreement and said that the GOC was fully supportive of it as a good first step in resolving the Darfur crisis. (NOTE: This represented a

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major shift in emphasis since the last time we had talked about Doha, which was pre-Agreement. END NOTE.) Faki said he was now relatively optimistic that the Doha process would move forward, primarily because the GoS and the Sudan rebels could trust the Qataris, who had worked hard to establish a reputation for fairness and to get up to speed regarding the facts on the ground. Unfortunately, other Arab states would have preferred Libya or Egypt as mediator, so there was confidence-building to be done among the members of the Arab League. Faki indicated that he had seen the JEM's "Foreign Secretary" Bushara since the Agreement and that the two had agreed on the success and usefulness of the first round at Doha.

¶6. (C) FAKI CLARIFIES GOC AT DOHA: Faki Mahamat clarified what his Deputy, Djidda Moussa Outman, had told us yesterday about Chad's role in the recently-concluded Doha talks. Chad had indeed been invited by the Qataris, just before the talks began, along with Eritrea, Egypt and Libya, to send an observer to the session. Faki, on business in Morocco at the time, had sent the Chadian Ambassador in Riyadh to the talks, so Chad was satisfied with its participation. Faki expected the Qataris to invite Chad and other interested bilateral partners to observe next rounds as well. Faki said that the Qataris were following up effectively on the Doha Agreement. He said that the Emir of Qatar would pay a visit to N'djamena on Sunday, February 28, to discuss plans for follow-on Doha rounds with President Deby and JEM representatives. Faki said that President Deby, who has been touring the East recently, including in military posts hard on the border, would return to the capital for the Emir's visit.

¶7. (C) GOC/CHAD REBEL DIALOGUE: Ambassador asked Faki if the opening at Doha might provide a propitious moment for the GOC to reach out to Chad rebels, who were making noises about being ready for dialogue after their "unification" in the UFR under Timane Erdimi. Ambassador noted long-standing USG long-range conversations with rebel leaders; told Faki of recent UFR requests for talks in Washington with USG officials; and said he wondered if there might be an opportunity here to bring the GOC and the Chad rebels to any kind of table without preconditions. Faki repeated familiar

GOC arguments that peace in Chad would result from progress in Darfur. He asserted that the GOC's strategic diplomatic goal was bilateral detente and reduction of tension with the GOS, not pursuit of some elusive entente with the Chad rebels, who were increasingly exposing themselves, and as mercenaries of Sudan, pawns whose word could not be trusted.

¶ 18. (C) TALKING TO REBELS/TALKING TO TRAITORS: Faki recalled that the USG had told the GOC of its intention, after the February Events, to try to dissuade further rebel attacks by branding the rebels as illegitimate and denying that the international community would ever sanction their taking power in N'djamena by force of arms. Nevertheless, Faki charged, after the rebels had promised the U.S. that they would follow a diplomatic path, they had demonstrated their faithlessness by attacking Chad in June. The rebels had always negotiated in bad faith, notably at Sirte and had gone back on their engagements there nearly immediately in late ¶ 2007. Faki said that the rebels were increasingly divided among themselves; their strength was diminished; and their dependence on the GOS nearly total. The GOC was not in a position to make concessions to the rebels, but did want to find a solution to the Darfur conflict, which would allow the Chadian rebels either to choose to go home or to go into exile elsewhere. Some of the more brutal chieftains, like Erdimi and Mahamat Nouri, had been tried and condemned in absentia. "They are traitors," said Faki, adding that he did not see how they could return to Chad. Others, he allowed, like Ahmat Soubiane, were free to return home, under certain conditions.

¶ 19. (C) Ambassador asked directly whether the GoC was prepared to meet with the Chadian rebels in a neutral location (Ref B). Faki said that N'djamena was willing to talk to all but a few rebel chieftains, but there were conditions. If rebels quit Sudan to demonstrate their independence from GOS control, and if they renounced violence, and if they contacted anyone in the GOC, then talks could start. Absent those conditions, Faki said, the GOC could not do more. "If they want to talk, if they leave Sudan, if they renounce violence, then they can come to us directly -- they know who we are, they have our telephone numbers, since we are their relatives," he added.

¶ 10. (C) ICC INDICTMENT: Faki noted that he did not believe
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the possible indictment of Bashir in early March would have major repercussions on the ground; the GOS, he predicted, would not overreact, because of its weakness and internal disarray on account of the ICC action. He did point out that with few regional players members of the ICC, the UNSC might have to endorse a Court indictment in order for it to stick, which could become problematic given the potential for a Chinese and/or Russian veto.

COMMENT

¶ 11. (C) Faki's comments on Doha and the Chad rebels accurately reflected increased GOC confidence regarding the objective correlation of power between Chad and Sudan, as well as its reduced fear of renewed Chad rebel attacks on Chad. That President Deby would be touring the East practically on the anniversary of last February's debacle in N'djamena, making incendiary anti-Sudanese and anti-Chad rebel speeches, including in military posts hard on the border, give an idea of how confident the GOC is at the moment. This confidence, which explains the increasing reluctance to reach out to Chad rebels, is based on a number of perceptions. The GOC believes it has shifted the military balance against the rebels, and now has significant, perhaps, decisive military superiority in eastern Chad. The GOC sees divisions among the Chad rebels as increasing, despite efforts to portray the situation otherwise, such as recent

formation of the UFR &coalition8 of rebel groups with Timane Erdimi as &president.⁸ (The French have told us that Erdimi's &election8 as UFR chief was welcomed inside the Presidential Palace here.) Faki's reaction to the UFR's letters to the USG indicates that he considers the move another sign of current rebel unreadiness to attack, as they seek diplomatic alternatives to now-impossible victory on the field of battle. The rebels wouldn't be seeking help or legitimacy in DC if they were ready and able to take on the ANT, according to GOC thinking

¶12. (C) The GOC notices what it considers diminished GOS material support for Chad rebels relative to last year as well as apparent alternate use of Chad rebels by the GOS inside Sudan to oppose the GOS's internal enemies. The virtual absence of rebel offensive activity in eastern Chad since November 2008 (in contrast to that we saw in the previous two campaigning seasons when rebels became aggressive early in dry periods starting in November 2006 and November 2007), may be an indicator of rebel inability to mount a united campaign. We suspect that the GOC calculates that the Doha Agreement strengthens the hand of the GOC's JEM ally, while weakening that of the GOS, and that continued commitment of all sides to the Dakar Accord implementation process protects Chad diplomatically, at least to some extent. Finally, the prospect of an ICC ruling March 4, and GOC belief that GOS will not &overreact,⁸ reinforces N,Djamena's current sense of relative well-being.

¶13. (C) We give a high degree of credence to what we estimate to be the bases of Faki's and the GOC's increased confidence vis-a-vis renewed Chad rebel attacks. The French and we think the SRSG agree generally with the GOC analysis. But we have always said, and still hold, that the only ones who really know exactly if, when, and where Chad rebels will attack into Chad are the Chad rebel leaders themselves.

NIGRO